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SUBJECT: AFRICOM CONSULTATIONS IN EGYPT

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Stuart Jones
for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Ryan Henry, accompanied by an interagency delegation, briefed Egyptian Ministry of Defense (MoD) officials on USG planning for AFRICOM on June 12. The MoD delegation included the Assistant Minister of Defense for Policy, MG Al Assar, the Assistant Minister of Defense for Armament, MG Fouad Abdel Halim, the Policy Advisor for the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI), MG Fouad Arafa, and the Chief of US Relations, MG Ahmed Mo'taz.

¶2. (C) Mr. Henry opened the meeting by giving MoD officials an overview of USG planning for AFRICOM and the status of consultations with other African nations. MG Al Assar thanked Mr. Henry for coming in person to consult on the new command and for the informative briefing. Each member of the MoD delegation then took the opportunity to ask questions and to share impressions about AFRICOM. The MoD officials' concerns and Mr. Henry's responses are as follows:

-- Timing: MG Mo'taz said that because of the regional situation, the timing is not right for a new command. Mr. Henry replied there may not be a clearly ideal time for the transition. The US wishes to assist Africa now in developing the capabilities to address Africa's problems, rather than waiting to respond to problems as they arise.

-- AFRICOM-AU dynamic: MG Mo'taz observed that AFRICOM's role and tasks may "interfere" with those of the AU. Mr. Henry explained that the US had consulted with the AU and that AFRICOM will complement, not compete with the AU's efforts and those of other African nations. African nations are best positioned to address Africa's challenges, Mr. Henry stressed.

-- Fear of a colonial approach: DMI's MG Fouad Arafa expressed fear that AFRICOM will impose solutions on Africa. He asked (more than once) if the new command intends to consult with African nations regarding AFRICOM's initiatives. Mr. Henry reiterated that leadership on African issues must come from African nations; AFRICOM will play a supporting role; and there are no plans to base troops on the continent.

-- Egypt's role: MGs Fouad and Al Assar separately said that not including Egypt in AFRICOM may impact negatively Egypt's ability to protect its security interests in Africa. Mr. Henry said the USG believes CENTCOM will better serve Egypt's interests, particularly concerning Foreign Military Financing (FMF). He said that the AFRICOM Commander will, however, include Egypt in all AFRICOM consultations and activities

after first coordinating with the CENTCOM Commander.

-- AFRICOM map: MG Al Assar warned that excluding Egypt from the AFRICOM maps currently in public circulation may damage or call into question Egypt's influence within Africa and asked the US to include Egypt in both commands. Mr. Henry explained that the need for a sole accountable command prevents the US from including Egypt in both AFRICOM and CENTCOM but said the USG can explore possible ways to highlight Egypt's unique role within AFRICOM.

-- Civilian vs. military entity: MG Al Assar suggested that the US may want to consider that a civilian entity, with military components, may be better suited to perform the tasks envisioned for AFRICOM. Mr. Henry explained that the USG has given considerable thought to new command's role and composition and noted that military troops are currently performing civic functions in many regions.

13. (U) The delegation cleared this message.
JONES